

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

_____)	
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)	
)	
v.)	Crim. No. 93-00008
)	
CLARENCE AARON)	
_____)	

DECLARATION OF CLARENCE AARON

I, Clarence Aaron, declare under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746 as follows:

1. I am the defendant in this case, and I respectfully submit this declaration in support of my Motion For Resentencing.
2. I was 23 years old when I was involved in a drug deal in 1992 that led to my conviction and incarceration. I am now 38 years of age and am currently housed at the United States Penitentiary in Coleman, Florida.
3. I was born on May 9, 1969, in Mobile, Alabama. I have a sister, Katrina, and a half-sister, Mardine Coker. My second sister, Stephanie, passed away unexpectedly in 2005. My mother, Linda Aaron, worked as a domestic servant, cleaning and taking care of children, to support our family. My father, who did not live with us full-time, was out of work for most of my childhood due to poor health.
4. We lived in the R.V. Taylor Plaza ("RV"), a public housing project in Mobile. RV was known for its crime and drug activity. While I was growing up, I avoided crime and drugs and instead focused on school, attended church regularly, and participated in youth sports programs.

5. When I was ten years old, my parents decided I should move in with my paternal grandfather, Clarence Martin, Sr. He lived in Toulminville, a middle-class section of Mobile. My parents wanted me to associate with children who were not from the projects and wanted me to attend schools in the Toulminville area, which had better academic reputations than the schools in RV's neighborhood. They also wanted me to benefit from associating with residents of Toulminville, who, unlike many people at RV, tended to be harder workers and responsible citizens who cared about their community.

6. My grandfather, who was a civilian employee at Eglin Air Force Base, served as my primary mentor and role model throughout my childhood and adolescence. For example, every Sunday after church, he would meet with me and his other grandchildren to discuss the importance of going to school, attending college, and saving money. He gave each of us a weekly allowance, but after each meeting we would return a portion to him to save. He would mark down what we had given him in order to keep a record of it. He then deposited our money in a special account at the bank, and every Christmas he would distribute checks from the bank for us to spend on Christmas presents. Through this system, my grandfather impressed upon us the importance of financial responsibility.

7. During these meetings, and through his example, my grandfather impressed upon me the vital importance of moral responsibility and getting an education. He himself had only completed the third grade, but firmly believed that the only way to better oneself was to obtain a good education. He wanted each of his grandchildren to get a good education, but often told me it was his dream that I, in particular, would attend college. He stressed the value of hard work, and required all of his grandchildren to do chores around the house in exchange for our weekly allowance. Although he was sometimes hard on me, I knew it was because he had high expectations for me.

8. My grandfather gave me the nickname "Snoop" when I was very young. I cannot remember a time when he did not call me Snoop. It was a term of affection, although I never knew why he chose that particular nickname. My friends and family continue to call me "Snoop" to this day.

9. My grandfather saved money for my education and was also my primary source of financial support from my childhood through college. He was my role model, and, as a child, I greatly admired him. As I grew older, I came to see him also as my best friend. We were very close and shared a special bond.

10. Starting in elementary school, I worked at part-time jobs in order to be less of a financial burden on my family. For example, when my family could not afford to buy a Boy Scout uniform for me, I obtained a paper route so that I could purchase my own uniform. I also mowed lawns in my neighborhood, and worked at a pizza parlor and fast food restaurants to acquire my own spending money and to contribute to my family's financial needs.

11. My family is deeply religious. I attended church regularly with them throughout my childhood and adolescence. I have always taken spirituality seriously, and as a teenager I developed a close relationship with my pastor, Reverend George McNeil, as well as with the assistant pastor of my church, Clifton McNeil. I enjoyed our weekly post-church conversations about the Bible and morality issues, as well as our conversations about sports, school, and life in general. These conversations increased my interest in Christianity and provided me with a moral compass with which to gauge right and wrong.

12. Athletics were always an important part of my life. Growing up, I played youth football and baseball. At Booker T. Washington Middle School, I ran track and set a record for the 800 meter race that still stands today. From seventh through ninth grade, I never lost an 800

meter race. My middle school coaches and teammates selected me to receive an award called the Spark Plug Award, in recognition of my outstanding contributions to the track and field team.

13. In high school, I played varsity football for all four years, ran track for four years, and played on the basketball team for two years. I was selected for the varsity basketball team my junior year, but my football coach encouraged me to focus on either basketball or football. I chose to focus on football and did not accept the position I was offered on the basketball team. My senior year, my coaches and teammates elected me Defensive Captain of the football team and later they named me Most Valuable Player on the team. I was also named an All-State Cornerback and a member of the All-County football team for Mobile County. I won full athletic scholarships to attend Mississippi Valley State University, Alabama A&M University, University of Southern Mississippi, and Alabama State University.

14. Because of my grandfather's emphasis on the importance of attending college, I was always focused on my schoolwork and on keeping my grades up. I scored a 23 on my ACT, which placed me in the 74th percentile nationally. A copy of my ACT score report is attached hereto as Exhibit 1. Achieving these scores and maintaining my grades gave me confidence that I would be able to compete academically as well as athletically in college.

15. My grandfather was a Mason, and it was his dream that I also become a member of the Masonic Order. I wanted to honor my grandfather and serve the community, so in 1988 I applied to join the Masonic Lodge in Whistler, a suburb of Mobile. The Masons consider themselves to be ambassadors of the community and only accept applicants with excellent reputations. They conducted a rigorous background check before they would allow anyone to become a member of the Order. In considering my application, they interviewed members of my church, my teachers in school, my neighbors and classmates in order to assess my suitability for membership. I passed the entrance requirements and proudly became a Mason like my

grandfather before me. I saw membership not only as a way to contribute to the community, but as a way to meet and network with successful business people who were members. I hoped one day to own my own business and I felt that meeting successful members and learning from them would help me reach my goal.

16. As a Mason, I participated in numerous community service activities. We collected toys for needy children at Christmas, cleaned up school playgrounds, and created and delivered food baskets for the needy. I often returned home from college to participate in Masonry activities. One activity I particularly enjoyed was "church visitation." During church visitation, Masons visit a member's church services to worship with him as a group.

17. After graduating from high school, I spent a summer in football practice at Mississippi Valley State. Before the school year began, however, I decided to transfer to Southern University ("Southern"), in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Southern had not offered me a football scholarship, but I wanted to transfer there because it was a more academically challenging school than Mississippi Valley State and had a better football program. I felt that four years at Southern would prepare me better for life after college, and that playing on the more competitive Southern football team would maximize my potential as an athlete. Because I did not have a football scholarship, I had to try out for a spot on the team. During the spring of 1989, I worked out nearly every day to achieve the necessary physical condition to play football at Southern. In the fall of 1989, I made the Southern football team.

18. When I was home during summer breaks from college, I took courses at Bishop State Junior College and worked at the Mobile docks loading and unloading cargo ships. Every summer I advanced a step in the longshoreman's hierarchy. I started out as an unloader, then progressed to lasher (securing the ships), finally reaching the rank of carpenter. I saved part of

the money I earned for my school expenses, and gave the rest to my mother to help her with household expenses.

19. While I was in college, my sister Stephaine had a daughter, Soporina. Stephaine was not married to Soporina's father, and he did not take an interest in Soporina. I took it upon myself to provide Soporina with a strong male role model. When I was home from college on weekends or during breaks, I would play with Soporina, take her for rides in my car, feed her, and put her to bed. One of my fondest memories of my life before prison is drifting off to sleep with Soporina in my arms. I bonded instantly with my niece and thought of her often while I was away at school. One day, I hoped to have children of my own. I planned to be there always for Soporina. Now, she often sends me letters and pictures, and we talk as often as possible. She tells me how much she misses me and asks when I am coming home. When I was incarcerated in Atlanta, my sister brought her to visit me several times. (Since I have been moved to Coleman, visits have become difficult.) Soporina's visits helped to sustain my hope for a future and often brightened my days in prison, but her visits also saddened me because she was growing up without me and lacked a father figure in her life.

20. While I was in college, my grandfather was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The news devastated me, but I maintained an upbeat attitude to keep his spirits up. When I was home in Mobile during breaks from college, I would drive my grandfather to his chemotherapy appointments at the hospital and take care of him afterwards. My grandfather died in December 1991, during my junior year in college. His death devastated me. I had come to think of him as my best friend and mentor. My grandfather had served as a moral compass for me. After his death, I felt adrift and depressed.

21. In addition to the emotional suffering it caused, my grandfather's death brought me great financial stress. He had shown me his will on several occasions before his death, and I

saw that he had left me the bulk of his estate. My grandfather had not left anything to my father or his other children, my aunts. My aunts were angry because they felt they had been overlooked, and disputed my bequest. I wanted to end the family uproar caused by the will and therefore acceded to my aunts' wishes. My acquiescence to their demands meant that I received nothing from the will. Although I had a grant for tuition at Southern, it did not cover books and other necessities. My grandfather had been providing me with money for things I needed at school, and because my parents were not able to provide me with financial assistance, his death left me in a precarious financial situation.

22. In the spring of 1992, just a few months after my grandfather's death, my former high school football teammate, Robert Hines, called me. After high school, Robert had begun dealing drugs for the head of a major Mobile drug distribution ring, Teano Watts. Robert told me that Teano was experiencing problems obtaining cocaine from his regular suppliers, and asked if I knew any drug suppliers in Baton Rouge. Although I had never previously used or bought drugs, I knew that one of my friends and college classmates, Ricky Chisholm, had a brother who had a reputation for being involved in cocaine dealing. I then made the biggest mistake of my life. Although I knew it was wrong to get involved, I informed Robert that Ricky Chisholm's brother, Gary, might be able to provide Teano with cocaine.

23. A few days later, Robert told me that Teano was willing to use Gary as a supplier, but did not trust him because they had never met. Teano wanted Robert and me to be present at the transaction, with me acting as an intermediary since I was acquainted with both parties. I agreed to do so although I knew it was against the law. Robert and I met Teano in Mobile, where he provided us with \$200,000 to purchase 10 kilograms of cocaine. Robert, my cousin James Perry, and I then drove to Baton Rouge to obtain the cocaine from Gary. Gary told us we would have to travel to Houston to buy 9 kilograms of cocaine from a supplier named Jairo

Plaza, who was unable to provide us with the full 10 kilograms sought by Teano. Robert paid another person, Chris Wiley, to transport the money to Houston on a bus. Robert, James and I then drove to Houston and completed the transaction with Jairo. Chris Wiley brought the cocaine back to Mobile, where Robert and I presented it to Teano. I received \$1,500 for my role in the transaction.

24. A few weeks later, I accompanied Robert Hines and James Perry on another trip to Baton Rouge to obtain 15 kilograms of cocaine from Gary. Gary again directed us to Houston. This time, Gary wanted to be present at the transaction, so he flew to Houston and met us there. In Houston, however, our planned transaction was thwarted by a robbery. This was the end of my involvement in the drug distribution operation.

25. I acknowledge full responsibility for the role I played in these transactions. I am ashamed that I had any involvement with cocaine. I was raised to uphold very high moral standards, and I fell far short of those standards. I humiliated myself and brought shame on my family, and for that I feel terrible remorse. I regret the weakness that led me to involvement in a drug deal. I also regret that I further compounded my mistake by not admitting to my participation in the conspiracy at trial. I am just grateful my grandfather was not alive to see my disgraceful behavior.

26. In early January 1993, as I was beginning my final semester of college, I returned from class to find my apartment in disarray. I called the police because I thought someone had burglarized my apartment. Later, I learned that FBI agents had been there looking for me. Immediately upon learning this, I attempted to turn myself in at the Baton Rouge parish prison. The parish prison turned me away because there was no warrant for my arrest in Louisiana. I later went to see my grandfather's estate planning lawyer, Bob Clark, who learned that there was

a warrant for my arrest in Mobile. As soon as I learned this, I turned myself in at a police station in Mobile.

27. The judge at my arraignment released me on bond. One of the requirements of my release was that I submit to random drug testing. I took these tests for almost eight months, and each of them showed that I was drug-free.

28. Shortly after my arrest, Mr. Clark brought me to the police station, where we observed, through a two-way mirror, FBI agents questioning Gary Chisholm. As I remember it, Mr. Clark told me that the government wanted information from me and might be willing to arrange for a lower sentence if I provided it. I asked if it would be possible simply to plead guilty, without informing on anyone. It was my understanding from Mr. Clark that this was not possible.

29. I was tried in September 1993. During the trial, other members of the conspiracy testified against me. The jury returned a guilty verdict, and the judge later sentenced me to three concurrent life terms in prison.

30. I was initially housed at the maximum security United States Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia. There, I continued to deepen my faith in Christianity and also pursued academic studies. In addition, I worked at the prison factories. There are three factories at this prison, and I served as Production Clerk, the highest prisoner-occupied position, at each of them. As Production Clerk at the mailbag factory, I worked in the factory office and handled factory troubleshooting, production schedules, contracts, and accounting responsibilities, among other things. Because I also worked in the two other factories at the prison, from time to time I advised the Production Clerks at the two other factories and helped them solve problems.

31. I passed a rigorous approval process to obtain computer access at my prison job. I had to obtain clearance from my Unit Team Leader, then from the prison security advisor, and

finally from the Security Specialist for Unicor (which is the trade name of Federal Prison Industries, Inc.). My knowledge of the "SAP" computer program further enabled me to assist the staffs of all three prison factories at Atlanta about questions and concerns related to their factory operations.

32. In addition to working at my job at Atlanta, I enrolled in a Bible course affiliated with Emory University and completed this correspondence course in about two years. Taking the course helped me continue to pursue an education from jail, as well as to continue my religious pursuits. I also attend religious services at the prison church every week.

33. During 2005, the Warden at USP Atlanta requested that I be transferred to a lesser security facility. His requests said that my institutional adjustment had been outstanding and that I had received excellent work performance evaluations. Copies of his requests in July and December 2005 are attached hereto as Exhibit 2. In June 2006, I was transferred to USP Coleman, where I presently live. Since my transfer to Coleman, I have continued to work in the Unicor factory as a Production Clerk.

34. My Bureau of Prisons Progress Reports state that I have maintained a clear conduct record, have been an outstanding inmate, have been a good worker, and have demonstrated outstanding institutional adjustment throughout my incarceration. Copies of my Progress Reports for January 2, 2001, February 23, 2004, and June 20, 2007 are attached here to as Exhibits 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The January 2001 Progress Report says that I was a "model inmate" at USP Atlanta.

35. In my Unicor Work Performance Evaluations I have consistently earned the highest possible overall numeric rating. Supervisors have said that I am an excellent worker, very dependable, and knowledgeable. Copies of my Unicor Work Performance Evaluation Records for the periods January through March 1995, July through September 1995, October

1996 through September 1997, October 1998 through March 1999, October 1999 through March 2000, October 2003 through September 2004, and April 2006 through March 2007 are attached hereto as Exhibit 6. I have also been selected for Premium Pay and recommended for bonuses, as shown in the copies of memos attached hereto as Exhibit 7.

36. Throughout my incarceration, I have participated in institutional educational, self-betterment and recreational programs in areas such as micro economics, behavioral development, Spanish language, religion, and photography. Copies of some of the certificates of achievement and certificates of appreciation that I have received are contained in Exhibit 8 hereto.

37. In prison, I have had the time to reflect upon - and come to deeply regret - the wrongdoing that led to my conviction and incarceration. I now realize that my actions were very selfish, and completely ignored my obligations to the law, my family, and my community. At the time I was involved in the drug conspiracy, I did not think through the consequences of my actions, how I was helping destroy the same community that I loved and had worked so hard to improve. For the shame, humiliation and damage I bestowed upon my family, friends and community I feel terrible remorse.

38. I fully acknowledge my responsibility for the role I played in the criminal acts that transpired back in 1992, when my cousin (James) and friend (Robert) asked for my help with the drug deal. I had never before been involved in any criminal conduct. I did not stop to consider my actions or ask myself what the potential consequences of my behavior might be - questions such as: (1) will someone be hurt by my actions? (2) how will my behavior affect my future and family and my community? I didn't consider any of these questions - I just acted. As I look back, I realize what a bad choice I made. I exercised poor judgment because I did not respect the values of good citizenship that I had learned as a boy, values I had tried to live by up until I became involved in the drug conspiracy. I was raised to uphold a high moral standard,

and by the decision I made, I fell far short of that standard. To this day, I deeply regret the weakness that led me to get involved in a drug deal. I also regret deeply my failure to own up to my criminal conduct and take responsibility for it during my trial.

39. I can't change what happened, however much I wish I could re-think the decision I made back then. All I can tell you, through my actions and my faith, is that I have matured and changed. I look at life much differently now. From the day I entered the prison door, I made a promise to myself that I would meet the trials of life head on, and I have become a stronger person behind these walls. I have reflected long and hard on the mistake I made. I have tried to take full advantage of self-improvement programs and have furthered my education. I have worked hard at my prison jobs and have been recognized for that. I have tried to maintain a spotless disciplinary record. My Unit Team has classified me as a model prisoner. To say I'm proud of that would be an understatement - not many inmates have that title. I am not the same person I was in 1992, and I am confident that I have the strength and understanding to make wise choices in my life.

40. I believe that the person I have become shows that I can be a productive citizen and make a positive impact on society. I have asked God for his forgiveness, and I have had to forgive myself. Now I must work for forgiveness of my family, my friends, and the community that I harmed.

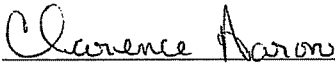
41. Through my walk with Christ, I realize that I have not lived up to my potential. The word of God says, We were born by his purpose and for his purpose. My biggest question for a long time was, what's God's purpose for my life. After reading books like Purpose Driven Life, by Rick Warren, and Awaken the Giant Within, by Anthony Robbins, I have seen how short of God's purpose I have fallen, and believe I have found a purpose. I want to work with wayward boys from the ages of 16 to 26 years old. I think that those years are the most

impressionable years in a young man's life. With my life experiences and my testimony, I believe I can be a light at the end of the tunnel for a wayward youth or young adult who has somewhat lost his way. I believe I can help them make the right choices, as I failed to do those many years ago, and my story can give them the strength to avoid the weakness to which I fell prey. As the old saying goes: "Each one teach One!" We all have learned much of what we know about being a man from role models we have in others. I believe that I can make an important contribution to my community through this work and that I can restore some of the damage done by my actions years ago. Knowing my purpose in God has helped me sustain my hope for a future. Paul said it best, My life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus - the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love.

42. I also want to give back to my family. I have stayed connected with them. Although my mother's situation does not allow her to visit me often, I try to talk with her every week that I can, and I have tried to give her support in her troubles. I also talk with my sisters and their kids. When my baby sister (Stephaine) passed away unexpectedly in September of 2005, I felt so guilty for not being there for her and my family. On that day, I lost a part of my soul. I often think about our time together and our love for each other. I think about a sister that I wasn't there for. I think about my two nieces that miss their mother. She has left a great responsibility for us to take care of. She has left behind two angels for us to remember her by. I talk with the girls as much as I can, but I sometimes hate to call home because I know they are going to ask me when I am coming home. Meagan, the baby of the house, often writes me and says she wants to see me, or asks when am I coming home. It hurts me to my soul knowing that one selfish choice I made has taken me from my family. I want so much to be there for them.

43. Every day I wake-up I have to deal with my reality. Those years ago, I made a horribly selfish, foolish and wrong decision that am truly sorry for. I so regret all the hurt and damage I have caused others through my transgression. One of my life goals is to be the best person I can be. I want to be the best son, uncle, friend and citizen I can be. As I sit here now and reflect on my current plight, I feel the growth, maturity and strength that my experience in prison has, in God's loving hands, brought about in me. I just pray for a second chance to be a productive citizen.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on March 19, 2008.



Clarence Aaron

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